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ABSTRACT

Designed for use as supplementary instructional material in a cultural anthropology course, this learning module introduces commonly employed terms used in the study of kinship and social groups. Conceptual categories used to describe the social structures of society are defined first, including culture, material culture, nonmaterial culture, society, primary groups, secondary groups, aggregation, and social categories. Kinship analysis is described next, with focus on the following concepts: (1) the nuclear and extended family; (2) marriage, including monogamy, polygamy, polygyny, polyandry, sorral polygyny, and fraternal polyandry; (3) residence, including exogamy, endogamy, matrilocal, patrilocal, and neolocal patterns; (4) bride price, dowry, and suitor service; (5) descent, including kindred, and bilateral, unilineal, patrilineal, and matrilineal descent; (6) clans, phratries and moieties; and (7) leadership, including matriarchal, patriarchal, egalitarian, matricentric, patricentric, and egalicentric models. Finally, kinship diagramming is covered. Performance activities covering the module's content are appended. (LAL)

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Kinship and Social Groups

A Modular Approach

Cultural Anthropology
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SOCIAL GROUPS AND KINSHIP

Introduction:

This module has been prepared as a guide to a specific area within Cultural Anthropology. Your task will be to read the materials, perform the tasks at the end of the module, and to cross check your answers with the information in the module upon completion of the performance activities. It will be your responsibility to keep up with the reading assignments in the textbook, and to take lecture notes,and film notes.

The module is designed to give you a basis for mastering a specific amount of information, and has been field tested with over 1000 students who have demonstrated by their performance on examinations, that the modular approach can increase the probability of student mastery. The theoretical perspective which is employed is based upon cognitive psychology, gestalt psychology, behaviorism and programmed learning.

Anthropologists have studied kinship and social groups as part of their research techniques for quite some time. American anthropology shares some common characteristics with sociology in that the concepts of social groupings can be applied to a broader area than kinship studies. This module is designed to introduce a student to the most commonly employed terms within the field inorder to increase their ability to comprehend the readings about other cultures. Kinship diagraming is also covered in a very basic fashion.

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KINSHIP AND SOCIAL GROUPS

Anthropologists study the diverse ways in which human populations seek to meet their basic biological and social needs. In the latter case, a number of conceptual areas are traditionally examined. The study of social groupings, kinship and related areas are considered as an important link in the analysis of human behavior. Kinship studies have been emphasized in traditional anthropological literature. The institution of kinship provides a major portion of support for primitive societies. The significance of kinship has been reduced in contemporary society because of the advent of impersonal institutions which have taken over some of the previous roles formerly attached to this aspect of social behavior. Yet, it now is beginning to appear that kinship served functions which have not been replaced with cultural complexes which are capable of performing with the same degree of effectiveness. It has been difficult to generate the same degree of compassion for humankind via governmental agencies, corporations, schools or employers that kinship bonds formerly represented.

As anthropology moves from the same degree of emphasis toward kinship, the function of social groups becomes far more important. Sociologists have relied upon the study of social groups to analyze both simple and complex societies. Anthropologists need to become familiar with the perspective in order to more fully comprehend the changes which

are taking place in society.

Human life is group life: the dependence of human populations on group activity is well documented. Even in the least materially complex societies, members join together to reinforce and help one another. Thus the social institutions which bond societal members together contribute to the survival of human groups. To help describe the social structure of societies, anthropologists have developed conceptual categories based upon the premise that group life is responsible for the attitudes, ideas and cultures which individuals and groups exhibit.

CULTURE is a term utilized by anthropologists and other social scientists to describe the social and physical traits that groups develop and utilize as tools for survival. Culture is composed of all human traits, and can be subdivided into two basic categories: MATERIAL CULTURE and NON-MATERIAL CULTURE. The material culture of a group is composed of tangible objects (possessions) which can be seen and touched. Non-material culture is a more nebulous concept. Ideas, language and philosophy are among the traits which compose non-material culture.

The term SOCIETY is used to describe a population which shares a common tradition or purpose. Humans in societal groups are the creators and transmitters of culture. Although there are many different types of social groups, among the basic units which underlie most cultures are PRIMARY GROUPS. Depending upon strong ties of reciprocity

and an intimate tradition to reinforce a common purpose, such primary groups are the foundation of most primitive cultures, and are most frequently represented by kinship units. Most members of such groups are willing to sacrifice for one another. The individual is not as important as the group, and the major consciousness is of mutuality and an interest in "we" rather than "me." The size of a group may have a direct bearing upon its ability to sustain a primary group orientation. Some cultures try to foster a primary group perspective by the formation of institutional complexes in which common beliefs are shared, the theory being that common identity and cohesiveness start at the small group level, with many such groups intermeshing and pyramiding into the larger cultural structure.

The major different between SECONDARY GROUPS and primary groups involves the degree of solidarity and group loyalty felt by the members. Superficially, secondary group members acknowledge a situational need for common identity, and work as a unit. However, secondary group members have less mutual identification than primary group members; the underlying interest and emphasis is on the individual rather than the group. The social bond of a team is a simple illustration of this concept. Whereas primary groups tend to have longevity, most secondary groups are transitory and situational.

An AGGREGATION is a broad grouping of individuals who may or may not have a common identity, tradition or mutual

identification. The term is used to designate those individuals or groups which are found within a particular set of physical boundaries. The population within a house, block, ward, city, county, state, or country can be considered an aggregation. SOCIAL CATEGORIES are broader groupings of individuals who have some mutually shared characteristics. Such social categories can be loosely or narrowly defined. For example, a category might be defined to consist of students, or of students who are left-handed, or of students who are left-handed and who have red hair. Categories are used to make generalizations about specific groups. Categorical definitions may, however, result in gross generalizations that promote misrepresentations or stereotypes.

KINSHIP analysis is an essential part of social anthropology. The familial relationships of group members have served as the basis for accomplishing many of the tasks confronting people in all cultures. Particularly in primitive non-Western societies, the reciprocal relationships of kinship enable one to receive the physical and social support necessary for survival. Family structure is a fundamental aspect of kinship. There are two basic types of family organization: the NUCLEAR FAMILY, composed of parents and their children, and the EXTENDED FAMILY, an elaboration of the nuclear family with additional generations or more distant relatives included in the household. Extended families have traditionally been the social core of non-western

societies, permitting responsibilities and tasks to be shared among a relatively large number of people. In contrast, the nuclear family is much more restricted in its options for assigning tasks, leadership and responsibilities.

The lifestyle of an individual in an extended family differs from that of a nuclear family member. The extended family provides continuity from generation to generation, with more adults available to assist with raising the young. The composite store of knowledge available in an extended family is also far greater than in a nuclear family. A young couple which joins an extended family may lack many of the alternatives common to members of American nuclear families. For instance, the extended family may allow the individual young adult little freedom of choice, as the older adults in the unit usually control decisions and possess greatest authority. Conversely, the freedom which members of contemporary nuclear families possess may be offset by a lack of continuity and close primary group support.

The main function of family structure is to ensure the continuation of a society. The primary task of family groups has universally been to channel sexual behavior and reproduction to the creation of new group members, and to provide for the nurturing and teaching of the young. The institutional complex of MARRIAGE is one of the key elements in family structure. A marriage ceremony indicates to the community that a couple is bound ritually, economically and sexually to one another. Marriage is a cultural universal

(a trait that exists in all cultures) and is different from simple co-habitation. The major division of MARITAL TYPES are generally classified according to the number of marriage partners permitted. MONOGAMY is the practice whereby one male is married to one female. POLYGAMY is the generic term which describes the custom of having more than one marriage partner concurrently. Polygamy is generally subdivided into two additional types: POLYGYNY, a variation in which a male has two or more wives, and POLYANDRY, in which a female has two or more husbands. Mate rivalry is not usually a problem in polygamous marriages. Frequently, the polygamist selects siblings as marriage partners, to minimize potential friction. This is called SORRAL POLYGYNY when a man marries sisters, and FRATERNAL POLYANDRY when a woman marries men who are brothers.

In most societies, marriage is considered the normal state for adults. Because marriage creates social bonds which affect the group as well as the individual, the institution is valued by the larger social group to the extent that in many societies selection of marital partners is considered too great a matter of community concern to be left to the decisions of the individuals directly affected. Most groups have definite attitudes regarding acceptable marriage partners; this is particularly true in cultures in which extended families are united via marriage. In such cultures, community stability and post-marriage residence arrangements are particularly important. Considerable inquiry as to the

acceptability of proposed marriage partners usually precedes formal betrothal. Of particular importance is the ability of the candidates to meet the economic and social responsibilities of a marital relationship. The element of "romantic love" which most Americans have been enculturated to expect does not usually enter into betrothal arrangements in non-western societies. In many societies, the rituals preceding marriage have been designed to ascertain the relative merits and weaknesses not only of the prospective partners, but of the families as well.

RESIDENCE and community membership are important considerations both before and following the marriage ceremony. In some societies, one must marry someone from outside the local community; the term for this arrangement is EXOGAMY. In other groups, the choice of marital partners is limited to members of the local group; this practice is called ENDOGAMY. Most social groups have patterns which designate where a newly married couple will reside. The terms used to denote residence are: MATRILOCAL, wherein the newly married couple live with or near the bride's family; PATRILOCAL, in which the new couple resides in the area of the groom's family; NEOLOCAL, in which the couple has total freedom of choice and selects a new or different location; and BIOLOCAL, an interesting variation in which the new couple rotates residence between both the bride's and the groom's family units. Biolocal residence allows both family groups to share the labor of the new family, and helps to support the

new couple both economically and emotionally. Most non-Western cultures acknowledge the many problems new families encounter, and thus have institutionalized customs and traits to facilitate the success of the new unit.

One frequently misunderstood custom is the practice of BRIDE PRICE. In this form of marriage contract, a prospective groom acquires an agreed-upon amount of items having a designated value within the culture. The prospective groom and his family offer an exchange of items to the family of the prospective bride. If her family accepts, the marriage ceremony is held. Sometimes bride price negotiations take years; in other cases, the transaction is accomplished quickly. A bride price is designed to illustrate the depth of interest the prospective groom and his family have in the status of the prospective bride and her family. The exchange also serves to replace with traits of equivalent value the lost labor of the bride if post-marital residence is to be patrilocal or neolocal. The prospective bride usually is allowed to indicate whether she consents to the proposed marriage. The bride's future status within the community is sometimes determined according to the relative value of the bride price given for her marriage.

The DOWRY represents another institutionalized device for helping to ensure the economic success of a newly married couple. In this ritual, the wife brings an agreed upon amount of economic traits to her husband and his family. They in turn generally use this income to assist the new

couple, or to replace with traits having equivalent value the lost labor of their son if neolocal or matrilocal residence is practiced. As with bride price, the status of the woman is partially determined by the size of the dowry she brings to the marriage. SUITOR SERVICE is a ritualized method whereby the prospective groom contributes his labor for a specified period to the prospective bride's family. It is a mechanism which allows first-hand inspection of the groom, providing the bride's family an opportunity to ascertain his suitability as a life-long partner and family member.

In most cultures, one of the traditional functions of marriage is the production and protection of children. Marriage and parenthood create a need to assign rights or property, authority, priviledge, and descent. Children and adults need to know their social and kin responsibilities. As a consequence, most primitive societies place great emphasis upon DESCENT, and the duties and obligations of kinship membership. The complexity of social relationships in primitive cultures indicates the degree of importance descent has to these societies. Anthropologists have developed terms to describe the most common patterns of descent. A composite kin group including all biological relatives is called the KINDRED. BILATERAL DESCENT is a system whereby the individual receives rights and priviledges from both parents. UNILINEAL DESCENT indicates that descent is traced through one parent. PATRILINEAL DESCENT is traced through the

father; MATRILINEAL DESCENT is traced through the mother.

CLANS develop from LINEAGES or biological descent groups to which the individual members can trace a biological connection. Lineages that have expanded enormously are usually the basis for clans. All individual members have a biological tie, but might be scattered over a wide geographical area. PHRATRIES exist when two or more clans are united by a link, which is frequently totemic. MOIETIES are present when a society is divided into two clans, or two phratries.

The topic of LEADERSHIP within family units has concerned anthropologists for a considerable period. Although most anthropologists utilize conventional terminology to indicate who the leader is within a particular unit, the terms applied are not sufficient to accurately describe leadership. To conclusively label the overall leadership patterns of a family fails to acknowledge that a rich variety of overt and covert social mechanisms exist for filling the leadership needs and roles within the unit, and thus may be misleading. It is better to examine and describe actual leadership roles than merely to assign labels. The introductory student, however, should be familiar with traditional designations and their meanings. The term MATRIARCHAL assigns leadership to females; PATRIARCHAL denotes male leadership, and EGALITARIAN indicates that leadership roles are shared by both sexes. MATRICENTRIC, PATRICENTRIC and EGALICENTRIC designate the more centered situational aspects of leadership

activities within a family.

Anthropologists use diagrams to represent a variety of kinship traits. Following are some of the more common examples which introductory students should be familiar with in order to comprehend the literature:

(1) △ symbol for a male

(2) ○ symbol for a female

(3) —— symbol for a marriage

(4) | symbol for a descent

(5) ⌐¬ symbol for siblings

(6) example of a nuclear family

(7) example of an extended family

(8) △—○—△ example of polyandry

(9) ○—△—○ example of polygyny

(10) (8, 9) are examples of polygamy

Performance Activities

Please fill in the blanks:

1. C_____ is the term utilized by anthropologists to describe the social and physical mechanisms people develop and utilize as tools for survival.

2. M_____ culture describes objects which are tangible.

3. N_____ M_____ describes ideas which cannot be touched but which are expressed.

4. The term S_____ is used to describe a population which shares a common tradition.

5. P_____ G_____ are considered as basic units which underlie most cultures.

6. S_____ G_____ are differentiated from primary groups on the basis of solidarity and loyalty.

7. An A_____ is a broad group of individuals who are defined by a physical boundary.

8. S_____ C_____ are broader groupings of individuals who have some mutually shared trait within a set or cluster.

9. K_____ analysis is an essential part of the study of non-Western societies.

10. The N_____ family is composed of the spouses and their children.

11. The E_____ family is composed of family members who are outside the nuclear family.

12. M_____ is one of the key elements in family structure.

13. M_____ types are generally classified according to the number of marital partners.

14. M_____ is the practice whereby one male is married to one female.

15. P_____ is the generic term which describes multiple marriage partners.

16. P_____ is a variation where a male has two or more wives.

17. P_____ is a form where a female has two or more husbands.

18. S_____ P_____ describes the marriage of a man to two or more sisters.

19. F_____ P_____ takes place when a woman marries two or more brothers.

20. The practice of marriage outside the group is called E_____.

21. The practice of marriage within the group is called E_____.

22. Residence with the family of the bride is called M_____.

23. Residence with the family of the groom is called P_____.

24. Residence which rotates between both families is called B_____.

25. Residence choice which is free to the new couple is called N_____.

26. B_____ P_____ is the process whereby a groom reimburses a family for the lost labor of a daughter.

27. The D_____ represents an institutionalized device for helping to ensure the economic success of a new couple.

28. S_____ S_____ is a ritualized method whereby the prospective groom contributes his labor for a specified period to the prospective bride's family.

29. Most primitive cultures place a great deal of emphasis upon D_____.

30. A composite kin group including all biological relatives is called the K_____.

31. B_____ descent is a system whereby the individual receives rights and privileges from both parents.

32. U_____ descent indicates that descent is traced through one parent.

33. P_____ descent is traced through the father.

34. M_____ descent is traced through the mother.

35. C_____ are groupings which have developed from lineages which are linked to a common ancestor or connection.

36. P_____ exist when two or more clans have a link which unites them.

37. M_____ are present when a society is divided into the clans of two phratries.

38. L_____ of family units is important to primitive cultures.

39. M_____ equals leadership vested in the female.

40. P_____ equals leadership vested in the male.

41. E_____ equals a shared leadership.

42. Sometimes leadership is S_____; this is designated to emphasize the flexibility of households.

43. Leadership centered in the female is termed M_____-centric.

44. Leadership centered in the male is termed P_____-centric.

45. Leadership which is centered in both is termed E_____-centric.

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